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RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAHND/CDRJTFB SOTO CANO HO PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/DIRJIATF SOUTH PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 0778
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000750

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS STILL STRUGGLING WITH VOTER
IDS

REF: REF: TEGUCIGALPA 468 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: CDA Andrea Brouillette-Rodriguez, Reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) Despite a recent influx of funding for election identity documents, Honduras, National Registry of Persons (RNP) continues to face an uphill battle in its efforts to document new voters in time for November elections. Over the past six months, the RNP has accumulated a backlog of 800,000 people applying for election identity documents ('cedulas'). The recently released budget of 118 million lempiras (USD 6.2 million) could allow the RNP to make up this backlog, but only if they encounter no significant production setbacks, and, of course, only if the President does not succeed in developing new ways to hamstring their efforts.

¶2. (SBU) As described in reftels, the Zelaya administration had previously withheld funds for processing election documents for six months and denied raises to RNP employees in an apparent effort to force the postponement of national elections. After much outcry in the media and pressure from the Embassy and international community, the Finance Ministry agreed to release 118 million lempiras which the ministry would disburse upon presentation by the RNP of its expenditures. This allowed the RNP to order the necessary materials for making the required id cards. According to the Directors of the RNP, Julian Suazo and Luis Suazo, the RNP signed a contract on July 4 for the materials to begin arriving on a rolling basis, beginning on September 15.

¶3. (U) In the absence of materials to produce id cards, the RNP has continued to accept card applications, creating both a huge production backlog and public discontent with slow (really non-existent) card distribution. The RNP directors believe that the current budget will create the capacity to make 1.19 million new cedula, which should go a long way to meeting the need to document the new voters. However, with the elections right around the corner, they fear they will only have sufficient time to complete the 800,000 they need to address the current backlog. The directors plan to begin with first time voters (currently 365,000 young people have applied) reasoning that Congress and election authorities might permit Hondurans with expired cedulas to use them for voting purposes.

14. (U) The RNP only has one machine to create the cards. Therefore, this machine will have to work 40 days straight, 24 hours a day. They have contracted 2 experts from the machine,s company to fly in from France to stand by to make needed repairs. If all goes according to plans, they may come close to creating the requisite number of cards prior to the election. However, a delay in the delivery of the materials, a major maintenance problem, a strike, or any number of unforeseen setbacks could completely derail their scheduled production.

15. (U) In response to the RNP,s documentary crisis, the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE) has stated that first-time voters who at least register for the national electoral census will be allowed to vote, even if they don,t have a physical id card at the time (a temporary 'contrasena' card will be granted instead). Originally, August 3 was set as the cut-off date to register for the national census; however, the National Congress extended this date to the August 13 to allow the 200,000 remaining first-time voters to register. In response to this extension, the RNP has extended its work hours to include late evenings and weekends in order to attend to the remaining applicants. (Note: Press reports indicate that as of August 11, additional demand for id cards has not materialized, with many RNP offices standing open but empty. End Note).

16. (C) Comment: In the face of consistent Honduran media and public and international pressure, the Zelaya government has finally allowed the machinery of the electoral process to

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move forward. However, given their consistent attempts to derail elections, with the RNP or TSE to blame publicly, it is likely more problems will arise. The RNP has managed to develop a plan for production (including massive overtime and working three shifts a day for 40 days straight) to meet the demand, but their situation is fragile. There is also continuing pressure on Congress to fire the current RNP directors for mismanaging the institution, but their dismissal at this stage would really only worsen the situation. End Commment.
BROUILLETTE-RODRIGUEZ